



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 23, 2000

H.R. 3671 **Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs** **Improvement Act of 2000**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on March 15, 2000

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3671 would have no net impact on the federal budget. Because the bill could affect the timing of outlays from direct spending authority, pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. We estimate, however, that the net impact on federal spending would not be significant in any year. H.R. 3671 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. H.R. 3671 would impose a new private-sector mandate on the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Based on information provided by the association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, CBO estimates that the direct costs of complying with the new mandate would fall well below the threshold established in UMRA (\$100 million in 1996, adjusted annually for inflation).

H.R. 3671 would amend the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act to reduce the amounts that may be spent for administering grants for fish and wildlife restoration. Specifically, for each of the two grant programs carried out under these acts, the bill would limit spending for administrative expenses to \$5 million annually through fiscal year 2003, and \$7 million annually, adjusted for inflation, thereafter.

Under existing law, the amounts set aside for such expenses are calculated as a percentage of total deposits to the two funds each year. The annual deposits consist of excise taxes (primarily on fishing and hunting equipment), import duties, and interest earnings. All such amounts, including those used for administration, are available without appropriation in the year following deposit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees both programs, spends 8 percent annually to administer the federal aid-wildlife program (\$14 million in 1999) and 6 percent to administer the sport fish program (\$17 million in 1999). By capping administrative costs, the bill would reduce such costs in the future, however, this savings would be offset by an equal amount of additional grant expenditures.

The bill also would create a new program for hunting education and safety, to be funded with up to \$7.5 million of each year's revenues. In addition, it would set aside up to \$2.5 million from each of the two funds for multi-state conservation grants. Finally, H.R. 3671 would establish within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service an assistant director for wildlife and sport fish restoration programs. The salary of the assistant director, who would directly administer these programs on a full-time basis, would be paid from the two funds. These new authorized expenditures would not increase the total amount of spending for fish and wildlife restoration.

The bill would impose a private-sector mandate by requiring that the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies prepare and submit priority lists for projects to be funded by the new multi-state conservation grant program. As the association has voluntarily performed a similar role for the Department of the Interior in the past, however, CBO estimates that the direct costs imposed by that mandate would not be significant.

The CBO staff contacts are Deborah Reis (for federal costs), and Keith Mattrick (for the private-sector impact). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.